

I CORINTHIANS
Chapter 6:1-8

INTRODUCTION:

A father overheard a commotion outside the window. He looked out the window and saw it was his little girl playing with some friends. Their voices got louder, more heated, and argumentative. The dad opened the window and said, "You girls stop that fighting." His little girl looked up and said, "But, Daddy, we were just playing Church."

Unfortunately, in some churches, you would get the impression that fighting is what church is all about. You would have gotten that impression from the church at Corinth. We have already seen in ***chapter one*** there were divisions and factions in the Corinthian church. Now in ***chapter 6***, Paul deals with another form of church division and conflict. There were those in the church of Corinth that were not getting along and were actually taking each other to court over the matter. In ***verse 6*** he spoke of - ***"brother goeth to law with brother."***

Paul is shocked that any Christian should prosecute a fellow Christian before a heathen judge - ***V:1***. If Christians will one day judge the world and even angels, they surely ought to be able to settle their worldly differences among themselves, - ***VS:2-3***. If such differences developed they were to appoint members within the church to reconcile the differences for them. Was there not one man among them able to act as a judge - ***VS:4-6***. It was a great evil that they had such lawsuits. It would be better to submit to injustice rather than bring such shame upon the church and the cause of Christ - ***V:7***. However, instead of submitting to wrong, they committed it - ***V:8***.

We have seen in our study of ***I Corinthians*** that the apostle was used of God to correct a great many wrong beliefs, and gave a solution for many wrong practices in the Lord's church. From these writings we are also able to see that this letter was intended not only for the church at Corinth, but it is addressed - ***"with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours:"*** - ***I Corinthians 1:2***

If the Lord's churches of today would be obedient to the teachings of the book ***I Corinthians***, there would not be as many problems within the church that hinders the progress of the gospel and the working of the Spirit of God among us.

In this section Paul deals with a problem which was developing in the church at Corinth. A practice of which I am afraid has been in many other places since then. A practice of Christians quarreling with other Christians about temporal matters; dragging one another into the world's courts for a judge's decision of their differences and difficulties. This practice is saying to the world, "we Christians are just as covetous and just as quarrelsome; we are as much concerned about having our own way and about self-pleasing as those of the world are".

VERSE 1:

The Apostle Paul is very upset over this matter and his wording proves it - ***"Dare any of you, having a matter against another"***. The word - ***"matter"*** used here speaks of a matter for litigation, court case or law suit. The church-house was ending up in the courthouse. Christians were suing one another.

This chapter does not teach that a Christian should never go to law. It is all but impossible at times to avoid it, even the Apostle Paul, when falsely accused before a Roman governor said in - **Acts 25:11**- "**I appeal unto Caesar**". He stood upon his natural rights as a Roman citizen, insisting that his case should be heard in the imperial court.

Here we find an entirely different case. Now we have brethren taking each other before the world's courts - **V:1**. If Christians have disagreements which they are not able to iron out between themselves, let them consult their brethren. Bring in others in whom they have confidence, and let them agree to abide by their brother's judgment just as sure as they would have to abide by a decision from a world court.

VERSE 2:

Now I must admit I do not understand all that is implied in this verse, but one day in the future all those that are saved will serve as a judge over this world and even angels. As believers in Christ we have a greater destiny. One of the roles in which we will serve during the millennial reign of Christ on this earth is that of a judge.

"Do you not know that the saints shall judge the world?" - This refers to something that many Christians have lost sight of. Our Lord Jesus Christ is coming again to reign for a thousand years. Then judgment shall return to righteousness, and when He reigns we shall reign with Him. It is written - **". . . the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom", Daniel 7:22**. If we are going to reign with Christ and going to sit on thrones of judgment with Him in that coming glorious kingdom age, what a ridiculous thing to think that we are not fit to judge matters having to do with temporalities here on earth when our brethren have disagreements.

"Do you not know that the saints shall judge the world? And if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?" After all, these things are so trivial; matters of money, of property, and matters concerning personal reputation are such small things when viewed in the light of eternity. We may make a big deal of them, we may magnify them and give them a place of importance altogether beyond that which they deserve, but the apostle declares they are very small matters, and he emphasized his position in - **V:3**.

VERSE 3:

"Know ye not that we shall judge angels?" - What is that? Angels who are greater in power and might, are we going to sit in judgment upon them? Are angels coming into judgment? Yes! **II Peter 2:4; Jude 6** - tells us of angels coming into judgment. Paul makes his point, if we are to judge the world during the kingdom age, if we are to judge angels, are we then unfit to judge affairs of this life? How much more should we be able to judge between our brethren?

VERSE 4:

"If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the Church." - In simple words Paul was saying, "Let the church, not the courts, take care of your problems."

The word **"judge"** speaks of giving a decision. If there are those in the church that are not getting along, the church is to make a decision about the matter and those involved are to accept that decision.

Paul speaks of those who are - **"least esteemed in the church."** The word translated **"least esteemed"** means "to make light of, despise, to be contemptible." He was saying that those who are insignificant in the church can be a better judge and make a better decision concerning such matters than the courts of the land. Paul was saying, "You don't need legal qualifications, you need spiritual qualifications."

VERSE 5:

"I speak to your shame." - I want to cause you to feel a sense of shame for this conduct and behavior. Is it possible that there is not a wise man among you? Is there not a single person that is able to judge between his brethren?" Paul was saying, "You ought to be ashamed at how you have been behaving." There were several reasons they should have been ashamed.

They should have been ashamed of the fact they could not get along with one another. They also should have been ashamed they were taking one another to court, and most of all that there was no one mature enough, spiritual enough to be able to pass judgment on their problems and come to a wise decision about such a thing.

They were strutting around - **"puffed up"**, **I Corinthians 4:6; 4:18; 4:19; 5:2; 13:4**. They were so full of pride and Paul says, "I can't believe there is no one in the church that can't help you settle such petty matters." It was a rebuke to their pride, their carnality, and to the leadership of the church. This kind of behavior ought to be an embarrassment to any church.

VERSE 6:

"But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers". Instead of referring the matter to the arbitration of a brother, ye go to law, and that before unbelievers. There are two grounds of complaint given here. First, they went to law instead of resorting to arbitration. Secondly, they made unbelievers their judge. The unbelievers here are to be understood as the heathen or lost people.

VERSE 7:

". . . there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another." Even though you say, "I do not know of any Christian to whom I could submit this case, there is another way out."

"Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do you not rather suffer yourself to be defrauded?" You do not have to stand on your own rights, it is not necessary that you should always be cleared, and it is not necessary that you should always prove that you have been wronged in matters of this kind. You can, if you will, bow your head and say, "I leave it all with God. I am not going to say anything about it; if they wrong me, He understands."

VERSE 8:

"Nay, you do wrong and defraud." So far were they from taking and acting upon the advice given that instead of suffering themselves to be defrauded, they defrauded others, and **"that your brethren"**, that were of the same faith, in the same church, and family. In short, neither party sought any thing more or less than to wrong, trick, and defraud each other. Because of the existence of this kind of vice and corruption, Paul saw the need to deal with the issue with boldness, straight forwardness, and plainly as is seen in the following verses.

CONCLUSION:

In summary, in - **chapter 6**, Paul told these Corinthian believers the church-house had no business being in the courthouse. They had no business settling the problems they were having in the church before a lost world, and no business hanging their dirty clothes on the line for all to see.

Let me repeat myself, Paul is not saying that a Christian should never hire a lawyer or go to court, and have a matter settled by the courts of the land. We read in - **Acts 25:11** that Paul himself appealed to the court of the land over his personal rights. What Paul is talking about is taking church problems to court and letting the courts settle those issues. Church problems are not to be solved legally, but spiritually.

Still we must not forget to apply the teaching of - **Matthew 5:38-40**. This passage deals with how we are to treat those who are lost and seek to do harm to us.

Summary of - Matthew 5:38-40:

According to our lesson we see among Christians that we should be able to work our differences out. If we can't, then let the church work it out for us. When we are dealing with a non-Christian, our reputation should be worth more than mere earthly possessions. We should not be known more for our lawsuits than our Christian love. May God help us to be what we need to be.

When someone attacks us or our possessions or someone wrongs us, cheats us, or takes our personal property, just how are we to act?

1. If it means that much to them, let them have it. We are not to set our affections on things on this earth anyway. Go ahead and give them the accessories that go with it. Teach them how to use it. Trust in the Lord to avenge our loss.
2. In our lesson we have seen how we are to deal with brothers in Christ, but what about lost people. Just how are we to deal with them those that are not brothers? First of all, our reputation or testimony should be worth more than mere earthly possessions. We should never be known more for our lawsuits than our Christian love. Our purpose, as a child of God, should be to glorify Him and not be a stumbling block to those who are watching our life.

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Study Guide

1. What is the problem that Paul deals with in ***chapter 6***?
2. What does the word, "***matter***" mean in ***verse 1***?
3. Should a Christian ever take another person to court? Explain your answer and use the Bible to prove it. Note ***Acts 25:11***.
4. Saints shall judge the _____ and _____.
5. Saints should be able to judge the _____ matters in the church?
6. The word "***judge***" speaks of giving a _____.
7. Explain the meaning of "***least esteemed***."
8. Explain how going to court with a brother is harmful to the cause of Christ and the church.
9. Give three reasons why the church at Corinth should be ashamed.
10. Instead of being ashamed they were _____.
11. They were going to court rather than take _____.
12. Explain "***Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do you not rather suffer yourself to be defrauded?***"
13. The members of Corinth were more concerned with getting what they thought they were _____ than the _____ of Christ.
14. Harmonize this lesson with - ***Matthew 5:38-40***.
15. Explain this statement: We should never be known more for our lawsuits than our Christian love.
16. Which should be more important – "stuff" or the "cause of Christ"? Which of these two did the church at Corinth feel was more important?